

Book Reviews

Taking the Village Online: Mothers, Motherhood, and Social Media

Lorin Basden Arnold and BettyAnn Martin, Editors
Bradford, Ontario: Demeter Press, 2016

REVIEWED BY MARYN BELLING

Assembled in three main sections, *Taking the Village Online's* focal points include: Constructing Motherhood and Social Media, Supporting Mothers Through Social Media, and Mothers, Resistance, and Social Media. This progression of categories mirrors the development of individual and community mothers: self-identity, connecting with others, and working to improve the world.

The chapters in the first section, Constructing Motherhood and Social Media, are concurrently scholarly and illustrative of the dynamic growth of today's mothers and their elements of self-identity. "Digitally Mediated Motherhood" is a savvy evaluation of the layered literacies of reading motherhood in the Information Age. Advocating mothers' online domain and its importance for the work of mothers and communication functions as both a stand-alone chapter and as a foundation for other chapters. "The 'Wicked Stepmother' Online" has a rich analytical understanding and explanation of Kenneth Burke's philosophy as a lens for the nuances (and less subtle elements) of mothering another's child(ren) as manifested in the Digital Do-

main. “Confession in 140 Characters” finds humorous, salient, and emotionally charged elements of motherhood appearing in Tweets. Socially constructed ideals for motherhood create a challenging environment for mothers. The norms of motherhood are at odds with the normative ideals. Finding an outlet in Twitter creates a variety of points for compassion, comparison, and tongue-in-cheek collusion—#BadMom is definitely a “first world problem” yet mothers continue to feel afflicted by its identity.

Supporting Mothers Through Social Media offers four different perspectives on mothering and the strengths of mothers. Starting with supporting breastfeeding mothers in military service in “Boots, Babes, and Boots,” then continuing into “Mothering in the Digital Diaspora,” we are able to see the importance of digital connectivity for breastfeeding and migrant mothers in keeping their support system close. “Mothers of Honor” starts with the emotionally charged experience of cesarean delivery, which is often marked as a mother’s first fear of failure, and ends with the importance of intentionally fostering online support communities for new mothers so they may find both emotional and intellectual connection with other mothers. “Mothering is NOT a Game” walks us through the experiences of mothers in Maine and their need for sufficient infrastructure to foster online parenting education; we see an unfortunate stigma associated with parenting classes as being state-mandated. Building on the author’s experience of teaching her child consistency through a preventative perspective, the knowledge and message of this chapter is a wonderful reminder that parenting is not entirely instinctive. Having the courage to seek resources is a sign of strength, not weakness.

The third section, Mothers, Resistance, and Social Media, shows that mothers have a distaste for the old days of the internet and are demanding a space of change while rebelling against the do-it-all-without-complaint that is expected of mothers. In “From ‘Fakebooking’ and ‘Flaming’ to a ‘Moms’ Support Network,” the ideology of perfection is deconstructed into its contributing elements. Momstown, as spotlighted in this chapter, offers a resistance to contemporary child-centered, intensive mothering expectations. Fostering the intrinsic belief that all mothers are intelligent and thoughtful, Momstown frees motherhood from the false binary of right and wrong ways to parent. An inspiring follow-up is “Hip Mama: Mother Outlaws in Cyberspaces” that emphasizes the individuality of motherhood as an embodied and lived experience. By further dismantling the ideologies of perfection into unique and even subversive discourses, “Hip Mama” takes the supportive yet largely normative experience of Momstown to a new level and allows us to see a freer perspective.

The collection concludes with two chapters focused on Feminist Motherhood and Feminist Parenting. By saving the best for last, we arrive at what we

are hungering for—whether we arrived at this chapter as mothers, scholars, or both, the analyses of the first nine chapters may leave us wondering what the future of motherhood looks like in our post-post-modern world and Information Age. How refreshing to work toward a fully-actualized social reckoning in the circles of motherhood online. While we see migrant mothers in chapter 5 as heroes, we do not otherwise see a discussion and reconciliation of racial and class issues. The importance of inclusive feminism in motherhood is especially highlighted here by pointing to specific hashtags. By the end, we venture beyond our own embodied experience as scholars and mothers and enter into the capacity to espouse feminist thought, practices, and ideologies in the larger world.

Twice in a Blue Moon

Joyce Harries

Edmonton, Alberta: Spotted Cow Press, 2007

REVIEWED BY LIZBETT BENGE

The blue moon: a literal phenomenon of the moon appearing blue because of specific particles in the atmosphere, and the rare occurrence of two full moons during a calendar month, with the second full moon being referred to as a “blue moon.” *Twice in a Blue Moon*: a book of poetry that is blue, like the depths of the sky and sea, blue like the throat chakra that corresponds to communication and connection. The blue of trust, loyalty, and wisdom.

Like a moon, the journey of this collection is spherical and illuminating. We build the world from a simple inquiry, “What If,” and follow its *Beginnings, Middles, Endings, and Goings On*, and *Beginnings Again*. This sphere encompasses love, lingerie, arthritis, butter, taffeta, canaries, shrimp salad, geraniums, and names that elude memory.

Readers will be quick to pick up on the recurrent themes of the aging body-mind, cooking, creating, knowledge, relationships, death, and motherhood. Humor bubbles from the pages as the author meticulously weaves together a tapestry of the quotidian, the sensational, and the peripheral. The texture of this tapestry is thick, rough, and strong. It is smooth and polished as a final product.

Harries’ writing is accessible, poignant, pedestrian, and thoughtful. Each word is deliberate, the measure of the stanza calculated, and the rise and fall of the reader’s breath becomes syncopated and in tune with the cycle of Harries’ poetic form.